

8 February 1963

Memorandum:

Subject: Current Status of Civil Defense in the USSR

Introduction

Intelligence on Soviet civil defense reveals in some measure the attitude of the Soviets toward the possibility of a major war and their projections as to the character of such a war. Soviet accomplishments in civil defense affect our assessments as to the vulnerability of the Soviet Union. We have developed (by deduction and from Soviet instructions for last minute civil defense preparations) a list of indicators -- actions which might be expected to take place in the USSR if the Soviets considered major warfare imminent. During the recent Cuban crisis, virtually no activity relevant to civil defense indicators is known to have occurred in the Soviet Union.

Soviet View of Civil Defense

The Soviets have devoted continuing effort to the preparation of civil defense since about 1949. Particularly significant changes in the system which have taken place since 1960 probably stem from the assignment of civil defense responsibility to the Soviet Ministry of Defense and from the increased consideration given wide-scale effects possible with large nuclear weapons. There is evidence of a significant controversy over Soviet civil defense policy (1959-61) after an apparent rejection by the Soviet leaders of proposals to construct massive, and costly, air raid shelters for the urban population. This controversy apparently ended with a decision to continue, if not to expand, civil defense preparations employing a variety of personnel protection measures -- strategic urban evacuation, specially constructed air raid shelters, adaptation of potential fallout shelter areas, and the use of field-type shelters located underground in the form of dugouts or covered earth trenches.

During 1962, Soviet military leaders gave unusually firm endorsement to the importance of civil defense as a component of national defense. The possible threat, as the Soviets see it, is war with the West; such a war would be a "rocket-nuclear" war; surprise attack is possible; and targets for attack would include industrial and administrative centers as well as military objectives.

According to one official, "The basic task of [Soviet] civil defense is to guarantee the necessary conditions for the normal activity of all organs of leadership of the country during the war period and the effective functioning of the economy. This is achieved by the maximum protection of the population... extensive and varied help to the injured and the rapid liquidation of the results of nuclear attack."

Organization

Civil defense staff officers function at all levels of government. The headquarters responsible for civil defense preparations is the Staff of Civil Defense of the Country, under the Ministry of Defense. Subordinate to the national headquarters are staffs at republic, oblast, and city levels. Civil defense officers serving with all these staffs are nominally subordinate to the Soviet officials who are comparable to our governors and mayors. Full-time specialist staff officers are believed to number between 5,000 and 10,000.

At the local level, Soviet civil defense relies on existing organizations -- police and fire departments, medical installations, construction units, and repair services -- to furnish additional leadership and the nuclei of operative civil defense units. These groups are organized into civil defense services and subordinate operating units that include those for fire defense, emergency engineering, medical aid, maintenance of order and security, warning and communications, transportation, food and trade, blackout and power supply, veterinary services, and decontamination.

Formerly existing only in cities and major factories, operative units -- now called "non-militarized formations" of civil defense -- are presently being organized in small towns and rural areas, according to Soviet civil defense literature. Such units, together with increasingly mobile urban formations, have the mission of rescue and repair operations in target cities. This is a definite departure from the earlier concept of point defense wherein Soviet cities were expected to overcome the effects of bombing with their own resources. Able-bodied men and women can be "enlisted on a compulsory basis" for service in non-militarized formations.

In residential buildings, small factories, collective farms, and schools and institutions, "self-defense groups" are organized from among the residents, workers, or students.

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Training

Soviet civil defense literature stresses that all adult citizens should be trained not only in "self-defense" but in repair, rescue, and restoration work. Citizens may be assigned to work with regularly organized civil defense units. It thus appears that in the final analysis every able-bodied citizen is to become a potential working participant in the Soviet civil defense forces.

The Soviet authorities have entrusted civil defense training of the general population to the 40 million strong paramilitary society known as DOSAAF -- Voluntary Society for Cooperation with the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

It is believed that about 100 million Soviet citizens have taken civil defense courses since 1955. Reports and published complaints as to the quality of instruction make it improbable that more than about one-fifth of these have been effectively trained.

Drills and training for operative civil defense groups have been principally reported in major factories. Drills having the general character of blackout and staff exercises have been reported, however, from more than twenty Soviet cities. US travellers witnessed one such drill in Tashkent in June 1962.

The DOSAAF has established a network of schools and training points throughout the USSR for the training of public instructors, and civil defense formation leaders and technicians.

Civil defense staff officers are believed to be trained in a staff college in Leningrad in courses varying in length from 9 months to 3 years.

Compulsory civil defense courses are given in the USSR in secondary schools and at institutions of higher education.

Protective Construction

Although the Soviets have probably examined, and rejected as too costly, a program to provide heavy blast-resistant shelters for the entire urban population, they have already prepared a variety of shelters and probably continue some shelter construction.

Basement shelter areas in masonry buildings built since 1949 have been estimated as containing space sufficient for about 16 million people. Additional space could probably be provided for 5 million persons in separately

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built shelters, bunkers, and tunnel-type shelters, and in the several deep-level Soviet subways. The latter have blast doors installed between the surface and the lower platforms.

The Soviets have recently expressed interest similar to that of the US in adaptable shelter areas -- basements, mines, interiors of large buildings, and the like -- and in dual purpose structures.

Evacuation

Since 1958, emphasis has steadily increased on plans for partial strategic urban evacuation. In a period of tension, the Soviets hope to be able to move school children, other nonworkers, and "certain institutions" to small towns and rural areas. Evacuation of some urban civil defense formations was planned as early as 1956.

Cost

The Soviet civil defense system has been developed in semi-secrecy, and its financing scattered through numerous local and national agencies. There is uncertainty as to the amount and cost of shelter constructed and very little is known of Soviet civil defense stockpiles. Recent estimates put Soviet civil defense expenditures in the range of at least 300 million to 500 million dollars per year.

Conclusions

In the field of civil defense, the Soviet Union is now apparently in the midst of extensive reorganization, replanning, and the establishment of new training programs -- and thus probably not combat-ready, even in the Soviet view. However, it possesses certain advantages and has taken several significant steps including: (1) some experience gained in operations during World War II; (2) centralized direction and control; (3) authority to compel service; (4) an existing corps of specialized officers for plans, supervision, and operations; (5) an established network of civil defense training centers; (6) compulsory civil defense courses in Soviet schools; (7) more than 20 million shelter spaces; and (8) about one-half the population at least familiarized with civil defense instructions. It may be concluded that the USSR has devoted considerable attention to the preparation of civil defense in the past, that it has an extensive base for further development, and that present indications point to continued effort toward improvement and adaptation in countering the threat of modern weapons.

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